



Natural Resources Conservation Service
60 Quaker Lane, Suite 46
Warwick, RI 02886
phone 401.828.1300, fax 401.828.0433



Helping People Help the Land...

SUBJECT: Activities Report, June 2 – August 3, 2006

DATE: August 9, 2006

TO: Rhode Island Conservation Partnership

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST REPORT

EASTERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (ERICD), by Michael Merrill, Acting District Conservationist

All the 17 new EQIP and 5 new WHIP applications have been assigned a lead planner and lead engineer. Many Eastern District projects are being surveyed with the assistance of an engineer from Massachusetts on detail until the end of September.

Several more Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification determinations were completed for lands of applicants that have not previously participated with USDA Programs.

Multiple cultural resource reviews are going on for projects involving potential ground Disturbing activities. For example, pipeline projects and irrigation lines are being reviewed with NRCS and the Public Archaeology Laboratory (PAL).

The staff has helped to implement practices or to modify contracts, so that approximately 65% of the backlog in Eastern District has been addressed. The remaining contracts need to be modified and many practices need bills and invoices for NRCS to make payment on backlogged practices (2005 and older).

The Kickemuit Fish Passage has been issued the notice to proceed. This fish ladder should be installed by this fall. For a nearby project, a press event has been set up for Walker's Farm salt marsh restoration project for the end of August.

The GLCI agreement with the district has been amended to extend this to end September 30, 2006. The work for the agreement for planning assistance has been reviewed and with a few updates to the plans the agreement should be completed.

NORTHERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (NRICD), by Michael Merrill, District Conservationist

All the 13 new EQIP and 11 new WHIP applications have been assigned a lead planner and lead engineer. Engineering surveys have begun on a number of these projects because clients have expressed interest in beginning implementation on these this fall. In-office cultural resource reviews have been started with some of these moving on for further review with our CR contractor.

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) payments were made for the five new CSP contracts funded. The 2005 CSP contracts were sent a notice informing them that they may now modify their contracts to add more land and / or more enhancements for this year. These modifications may not be fully funded in FY07.

Several more Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification determinations were completed for lands of applicants that have not previously participated with USDA Programs.

Only a few more projects are left to install that would be eligible for the energy incentive (15% more money) which had been changed to September 1, 2006. Unfortunately, delays due to the wet weather prohibited some of these projects from beginning and likely will not make the deadlines.

The permits for the first fish passage project on the Woonasquatucket was submitted and we received comments back from DEM on needed additions to the permit. It is still hoped that the permit will be issued and construction work started this year.

The staff has helped to implement practices or to modify contracts, so that approximately 50% of the backlog in Northern District has been addressed. The remaining contracts need to be modified and many practices need bills and invoices for NRCS to make payment on backlogged practices (2005 and older).

A few older WHIP contracts have some remaining funds and staff is working to close these contracts out by conducting status reviews with these clients.

**SOUTHERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SRICD), by Michael Kenyon,
District Conservationist**

The FY06 EQIP and WHIP applications that were approved for funding determined what the additional engineering workload is for the remaining fiscal year. The 25 EQIP contracts and 12 WHIP contracts were divided through-out the state. The dozen or so EQIP contracts that were for aquaculture operations educated the staff in an environment that we were not previously involved in. The remaining EQIP contracts included agricultural waste management, wildlife damage protection, and irrigation water management issues. A couple of agricultural waste management contracts are quite complex and large in scale. Therefore, RI NRCS is currently looking into hiring an out of state NRCS engineer to devote their skills and time to these complex projects.

In addition, the Energy Initiative effort to install those practices that are eligible for an additional 15% increase in re-imbursement was well underway and construction inspection and oversight kept the staff very busy. The original June 30th deadline was moved to September 1st as a result of a request sent in by the Rhode Island NRCS Staff. The reasoning for the request in changing the deadline was primarily due to the large quantities of rainfall that the state experienced over the last several months, which prohibited installation of the eligible practices.

As discussed in a previous Partnership Report, this year's clients began implementation of their plan and contract significantly earlier than previous year clients. This mention became validated

in that one contract has already been completed and several more may be completed by the end of the fiscal year.

Follow-up continued on previous year contracts. Previous year EQIP, WHIP, DAP, GRP, AMA, SWCA, and WRP contracts were also recipients of follow-up in eight cities and towns, while several individuals received general conservation technical assistance. The process of cancellation/termination of contracts due to inactivity or loss of control of the land began on six contracts in Kent and Washington County. In addition, an easement of approximately 30.5 acres in the town of Warwick was purchased as part of the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP).

Other noteworthy activities included the release of beetles as a biological control of Purple loostrike in the town of North Kingstown at Dworman Nature Preserve.

EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (ETVP), by Jeanne Comerford, Public Affairs Specialist

June through July 2006, RI NRCS used 10 volunteers for a total of 120 hours to assist with implementing NRCS programs/services

ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES, by J. Eric Scherer, State Resource Conservationist

Economics: State economist reviewed production and income data for 84 applicants to determine their eligibility for the EQIP Farm Program. Cost data for projects completed in the past fiscal year are being entered into a spreadsheet in preparation to update the cost list for practices that are implemented through our farm programs.

NEPA: NRCS is working with several partners to investigate alternatives to restore fish passage in the Pawtucket River in the vicinity of the Pawtucket Dam. NRCS has taken the lead in providing a cultural resource review of all the proposed alternatives to insure that cultural resources are considered and protected throughout the project. Technical staff has participated in both a stakeholder meeting and a public meeting regarding the restoration of fish passage in the Pawtucket River. The other partners for this project include: Pawtucket River Authority and Watershed Council; Narragansett Bay Estuary Program; Save The Bay; R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council; R.I. Corporate Wetlands Partnership; R.I. Department of Environmental Management; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Conservation Practice Standards:

NRCS staff has been asked by URI Cooperative Extension Service (CES) through the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program to work jointly on interim standards in the state wherever possible. Currently CES is reviewing that list of current and potential interim standards where joint efforts will be of benefit as well as those current conservation practice standards that are being reviewed and possibly updated with assistance by other Departments at URI.

Technical staff is currently reviewing the following national standards for use in Rhode Island:

- Irrigation Tail Water Recovery (Code 447)
- Saline and Sodic Soil Management (Code 610)

Annual reports have been submitted for the interim standards:

- Transition to Organic Ag (Code 789)
- Shellfish Aquaculture Management (Code 706)

National Standards that are up for review by State in the past three months include:

- Fish Passage (Code 396 d1)
- Fishpond Management (Code 399 d1)
- 330d2 - Contour Farming (Code 330 d2)
- 332d2 - Contour Buffer Strips (Code 332 d2)
- 393d1 - Filter Strip - (Code 393 d1)
- 395d2 - Stream Habitat Improvement and Management (Code 330 d2)
- 614d3 - Watering Facility (Code 614d3)
- 441d2 - Irrigation System, Microirrigation (Code 441d2)

If you have any questions on these and other Conservation Practice Standards, please direct them to J. Eric Scherer, State Resource Conservationist, 401-822-8814

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, by Andrew Lipsky, State Biologist

On May 17, 2006, a workshop was held by NRCS for the 2006 EQIP funded Shellfish growers. NRCS staff, Dale Leavitt, Roger Williams University, Dave Bengtson, University of Rhode Island, presented the growers with the necessary worksheets, documentation, and details for a number of the conservation practice components that are part of the USDA EQIP Shellfish Management Conservation Plans. Nine of the eleven funded growers were present for the meeting. The workshop turned out to be an overwhelming success in order to work out the kinks in this brand new initiative for Rhode Island growers.

ENGINEERING, by Frank Vogel, Assistant State Engineer

Pocasset Floodplain Management Study (FPMS): Final draft of the Hydrology and Hydraulics report was presented to the CT State Conservation Engineer for review. Comments have been received back and are in the process of being incorporated. The engineering consultant firm GZA has begun development of the preliminary designs and analysis for selected alternative solution options. The Flood Plain Management Study is scheduled for completion and publication by September 30 2006.

Engineering Services: The NRCS source selection board has chosen two firms (EA Associates from Warwick, RI and Fuss and O'Neill from Providence, RI) to perform various natural resource projects throughout the state of Rhode Island on an as-needed task order basis. The scope of services includes engineering planning, survey, design and construction oversight.

Pocasset River Watershed

Model Development: The final hydrology and hydraulic models for the study have been completed. The models were reviewed by the Rhode Island State Conservation Engineer and

tentatively approved. The models are currently being used to complete the analysis of potential alternatives to mitigate the flooding.

Flood Plain Management: The Flood Plain Management Study is nearing completion. The final Draft will be sent to the Steering Committee by August 11, 2006. The study will be forwarded to the Rhode Island State Conservation Engineer for final review and approval.

Watershed Plan: Work to complete the Watershed Plan is continuing. GZA Geoenvironmental is completing the 30% designs for all NRCS preferred alternatives. They will also be completing the analysis, using the hydrology and hydraulics, of the impacts (both positive and negative) that could be caused by the recommended alternatives. The following is the schedule to completed the plan: complete draft EIS/Watershed Plan by September 200; hold scoping meeting with federal partners; send draft for review to State Conservation Engineer and Connecticut Watershed Staff; send draft for review to Pocasset Steering Committee; post to federal register for public comment; receive and address comments; completed final plan; forward to National office for approval.

GRAZING LAND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE (GLCI), by Michael Merrill

The East National Technology Support Center (ENTSC) grazing specialist, Kevin Ogles visited the RI office for the afternoon to discuss the RI situation and see a bit of the landscape for his orientation. We followed up by planning another visit in late August to help with a short training workshop for RI NRCS staff.

A pasture walk was organized and put on at the Watson Farm by the managers, Don and Heather Minto. Many farmers and partners attended, with a number of speakers discussing pasture management and herd selection. NRCS spoke about the types of practices in a typical grazing plan and some of the technical and financial assistance programs offered by the agency. It was decided that GLCI should put in an order of 150 Grazing / Pasture sticks to be used for RI as a teaching tool to hand out at future pasture walks.

The GLCI agreement with ERICD was amended to extend and finish by September 30, 2006 in order to consider Phase I planning work accomplished by ERICD.

FARM BILL PROGRAMS, by Vicky Drew and Joe Bachand)

Conservation Security Program (CSP):

CSP contracts were signed with 5 of the 7 eligible CSP applicants this year. The remaining 2 applicants were not selected for funding due to their category placement and funding limitations at the national level. The FY 2007 watershed nomination was developed and sent to the national office for review and approval. This involved working with MA to discuss and develop the information and criteria needed to nominate the watershed that was selected.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):

Program manager performed 5% spot check review of randomly selected limited resource producers and beginning farmers recently approved for a contract. Documentation needed to complete the review was received from two of the three farmers that were contacted, both of which are in compliance with the provisions.

Two meetings were held with staff and key members of the State Technical Team to begin development of the FY 2007 Cost List, as well as to review and update the policies used to implement the program. Target deadline for finalizing both documents is October 1, or the start of the next fiscal year. Many changes will be made to the cost list to comply with national office requirements and to bring it in line with agency policy regarding cost share rates.

EQIP Conservation Innovation Grants have been drafted and are being reviewed both internally and by the grant recipients for final signature prior to September 30.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP):

No work to report this period.

Farm and Ranch land Protection Program (FRPP):

All applications were ranked, and five of the 10 eligible applications were selected for funding, fully obligating the FY 2006 FRPP funds. Cooperative agreements were developed and signed by the entities.

Amendments to two prior year cooperative agreements were made during this period to accommodate changes in negotiations with farms previously selected for funding and expected closing dates. FRPP allows for a substitution of a new parcel for prior approved parcels where negotiations with the landowner have stalled or ended.

Program manager is working with other NRCS staff to update the FRPP database to accommodate new data requested by the national office, such as the number of forested and non-forested wetland acres on each parcel. Some of this data, such as the average length of time it takes to close on easements, will be used next fiscal year by the national office to determine how much FRPP money to allocate to each state.

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP):

Barton Farm: The WRP easement has been filed in Warwick City Hall. Christine Offenberger, our closing lawyer will forward all final documents to NRCS. The document will be forwarded to USDA Office of General Council for final approval. Once final approval is received the final easement payment will be made. NRCS will then meet with the City and other interested parties to begin development of the restoration plan.

Aguntaug Swamp: NRCS requested additional Technical Funds to complete the restoration planning and design. The funds have been received. NRCS will develop a Scope of Work to hire one of our consultants to complete the designs and permitting.

Gooseneck Cove: NRCS requested additional technical assistance funds to complete permitting and designs for this project. We are awaiting final approval from our National office.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

All of the FY2006 WHIP funding has been allocated to 31 contracts. The Field Team is continuing to implement the conservation practices for these projects.

FY1998-FY2003 Contracts: All FY 1998-2003 WHIP contracts were not recorded in the Protracts Contracting System. The Protracts system was activated in FY2004. Our National

office has provided direction to put all 2004 contracts into Protracts by January 1, 2007. All contract holders have been sent certified letters that we would like to complete their contracts by January 2007 or have then loaded into Protracts. This action will allow NRCS staff to manage all contracts in the same manner.

FY 2007 Ranking: All states have been mandated to begin using the "Ranking Tool" found in Protracts to rank and process all applications. The tool is currently being developed by each state. The tool uses a template within Protracts that can be tailored for each individual state or area. NRCS will meet with the Local WHIP Team and the State Technical Committee to review the Ranking Tool.

Cost Lists: New rules have been directed by our National Office with regards to how practice costs will be developed. In 2007 all cost will be base on Flat Rates (FR) or Average Cost (AC). NRCS will have to develop a new cost list to abide with this directive. NRCS will review the new list with the Local WHIP Team and the State Technical Committee

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS, by Jeanne Comerford)

Outreach Events

Attendees

June 9, Legislators Project Tour	15
June 29, Chief Knight's Project Tour and Luncheon	65
July 13, Purple loostrife, monitoring	12
July 29, Watson Farm Pasture Walk	40
April 8, Forestry & Wood Expo, Kate gave a talk	12

OPERATIONS, by Jackie Pashnik

Personnel Actions:

- ♦ Michelle Marasco was hired for the summer as a Soil Conservation Aide, effective 7/10/2006. Michelle was a member of the winning RI Envirothon Team.
- ♦ Margot "Maggie" Payne was hired as an intermittent Biologist Technician, effective 7/10/2006. Maggie is assisting with the Subaqueous soils mapping.
- ♦ Jessie Dyer was converted to the Student Employment Program effective 7/10/2006.

Performance Goals:

Performance Summary Status through August 3, 2006	Goal	Total Progress	Progress Percent
CNMP Applied (No.)	10	2	20
CNMP Written (No.)	9	1	11
Conservation Plans for Cropland Written (Ac.)	1,000	955	95
Conservation Plans for Grazing Land Written (Ac.)	400	464	116
Farmland & Grazing Land Protected by Conservation Easements (Ac.)	158	70	44

Performance Summary Status through August 3, 2006	Goal	Total Progress	Progress Percent
Grazing land with Conservation Applied (Ac.)	185	450	243
Irrigation Efficiency Improved (Ac-Ft)	15	6	38
Local Businesses Created in Rural Communities through RC&D Assistance (No.)	4	16	400
Local Jobs Created in Rural Communities through RC&D Assistance (No.)	8	15	188
Non-fed. Land Managed for the Protection & Enhancement of Habitat for Species with Declining Populations (Ac.)	7,430	9,386	126
Non-fed. Land Treated for Fish & Wildlife Habitat (Ac.)	535	3,419	639
Prime, Unique, and Important Farmland Protected by Conservation Easements from Conversion to Non- Agricultural Uses (Ac.)	89		
Reduction in Cropland Soils Damaged by Erosion (Ac.)	100		
Soil Erosion Reduced (Tons)	310	43	14
Soil Surveys Mapped or Updated (Ac.)	1,000		
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (Ac.)	79,000	93,938	119
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (No.)	9	5	56
Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies or Inventories for Flood Prevention or Mitigation (No.)	3	2	66
Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies or Inventories - Water Conservation & Water Supply (No.)	1		
Wetlands Created, Restored or Enhanced (Ac.)	130	125	96
Wetlands Protected by 30-year or Perm. Easements (Ac.)	29	30	105

Training, Conferences, and Meetings Attended

- ♦ RC&D Program Management Training, Scherer and Modisette
- ♦ Pastureland Ecology II, Bonome
- ♦ Water Quality Assessment, Boettger
- ♦ Federal Lease Law, Virgilio (MA NRCS)
- ♦ NRCS Boot Camp Weeks 1-3 (of 6), Giorgi
- ♦ National Efficiency Workshop, Drew and Rides at the Door
- ♦ National Leadership Team Meeting, Rides at the Door
- ♦ Northeast NACD Meeting, Rides at the Door

- ♦ National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees Conference, Bonome and Dyer

RI RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC&D), by Chris Modisette, RC&D Coordinator

Highlights

Grow Smart Rhode Island - Power of Place Summit

On behalf of the RC&D Council I spoke at the Grow Smart Rhode Island Power of Place Summit, held on May, 12, 2006 as part of a panel that dealt with the issue of “**The Environmental & Open Space Impacts of Sprawl**”. Other panel participants included Chet Arnold, NEMO Program Director, UCONN, Peter August, URI Coastal Institute, Kathleen Wainwright, Director for Conservation Programs, the Nature Conservancy, W. Michael Sullivan, Director of RIDEM who moderated the panel. Approximately 60 people attended the session.

Overall attendance at the summit approached 500 people, and was the largest such policy gathering of opinion leaders, state and local officials, citizens and development professionals to consider how Rhode Islanders can better manage the growth of vibrant, prosperous and livable communities today and for future generations. The summit was meant to highlight Land-Use 2025 from the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program.

RI Ag Days

RC&D shared a display with RI Rural Development Council at RI Ag Day held at the State House on May 17, 2006. Gerry Bertrand and Chris Modisette staffed the display.

RI Envirothon

The RC&D Council was sponsor of the 2006 RI Envirothon Competition. Ten (10) teams from four (4) schools with over 50 students participated in this year's competition. The overall team winner was from a team from Narragansett High School. Gerry Bertrand, Bev Migliore and Chris Modisette participated as judges for the competition. This year's competition was hosted by the Apeiron Foundation on May 18, 2006

RI Farm Bureau – Farm Watch Television Program

Al Bettencourt invited RC&D to participate in the next taping of their TV show which is aired on Cox Cable. The taping took place at the Cox Cable TV studio on June 28 at 6:00 pm in Johnston. The TV show will be about Rhody Warm (the wool program), RI Raised Meat Cooperative, and the Rhody Warm project. They will devote about 12-14 minutes to each of the above topics.

RC&D Receives USDA-NRCS CIG Grant: RI Coverts Project

The RI Resource Conservation & Development Area (RIRC&D) was notified that it will be receiving Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) to establish the Coverts project in Rhode Island. RI RC&D will capitalize on the availability of expertise from UCONN Cooperative Extension as well as the interest by our partners to establish this as a viable wildlife habitat improvement opportunity for Rhode Island's woodland owners.

Rhody Warm Project featured in The Providence Business News

The **Providence Business News** ran an article on the Rhody Warm project in their July 31, 2006 edition. The idea was picked up by the newspaper as a result of a press release generated from Senator Chafee's office announcing the award of USDS Rural Development RBEG grants to the RC&D Council.

Rhode Island Foundation Grant has been selected for consideration in the next steps of their Strategy Grant application process. The RC&D Council application, *Watershed Protection through Forest Stewardship: a Short Course for Forest Landowners and Managers*, was one (1) of 156 grants out of an initial pool of 280 that was selected for further consideration.

RI Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Manual

An electronic version of the current ***Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Manual*** has been produced through a cooperative effort with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT). RIDOT has placed the handbook on their website. A copy of the electronic handbook has been forwarded to USDA-NRCS, will be posted on the RC&D website, and is available to any and all who would like it in an electronic version.

RC&D participates in the scoping session for the **Environmental Assessment** for the **Narragansett Indian Tribe's Forest Management and Fire Management Plan** on July 18, 2006.

Rhode Island RC&D Area Council to host the **2007 New England RC&D Fall Conference**.

II. PROJECTS

2006 Forestry & Wood Expo

RI RC&D partnered with the Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization, RIDEM-Division of Forest Environment, RI Rural Development Council, Southern New England Forest Consortium, Inc. and the RI Tree Farm Committee to sponsor the first annual Forestry & Wood Expo. The expo provided a series of seminars, workshops as well as business luncheon to highlight the contribution of the forestry and wood products to Rhode Island's economy. The expo served as the kick-off event to the celebration of the 100th anniversary of forestry in Rhode Island. Over 600 people attended the event that featured 25 exhibitors, a business luncheon featuring Governor Carcieri, a business roundtable hosted by Lt. Governor Fogarty, and a school to career workshop attended by over 160 students from seven (7) area high schools.

Rural Fire Protection (Develop Area-wide Plans to reduce surface (stream) water withdrawals to protect fisheries and to prevent the release of PM 2.5 into the atmosphere as a result of wildfires)

1. Designed and produced 200 Dry Hydrant Guidance Manuals with the assistance of RIDEM-Divisions of Forest Environment and Freshwater Wetlands
2. Received requests for eight (8) plans from Little Compton (2), Block Island (2), western Coventry (2), and West Greenwich (1-2)
3. Worked with Cathy Sparks to prepare draft Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Environmental Management, Division of Forest Environment and the Rhode Island Resource Conservation and Development Area Council, Inc., the Grantee, for the purpose of conducting the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program (VFA) in the State of Rhode Island.
4. Met with the Little Compton Fire Department to initiate their application for three (3) dry-hydrant projects under this agreement; and
5. Completed three (3) area-wide plans for the above referenced dry-hydrants covering 1,506 acres.

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)

RI RC&D assists the RIDEM – Division of Forest Environment (RIDFE) with the implementation of the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) by administering cost-share payments to eligible forest landowners for completed FLEP practices as approved by RIDFE.

The purpose of the FLEP is to provide a coordinated and cooperative Federal, State, and local sustainable forestry program for the establishment, maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of forests on non-industrial private forest land.

To date in FY 2006 the program has enrolled 1,564.5 acres of forestland involving 18 forest landowners who received \$11,784.00 of cost-share assistance.

Rhode Island Stream Continuity Project (Develop sub-watershed Plan(s) to assist Trout Unlimited and the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association to assess and improve stream continuity in the 33,750 acre Upper Wood River Watershed).

1. Inventoried 140 sites to date
2. NRCS hired intern Meaghan Schaffer from the URI Department of Natural Resources Science to work on this project during the summer of 2006. She will pick-up where Katie Weiss left off.

The following work has been completed by intern Meaghan Schaffer:

3. Have compiled a list of GCN species which use upper perennial stream systems. She is focusing on gathering research today on their life history characteristics and the habitats they require for survival.
4. Quality controlled data sheets from Trout-Unlimited with NRCS computer generated data of stream crossings.
5. Digital photos of the crossings showing both upstream and downstream of the culverts or bridges have been hyperlinked with the NRCS crossings data points. Compiled a list of wildlife species which may use intermittent stream systems and where stream continuity would be important.
6. Prioritizing the culverts within the Upper Wood River watershed in terms of being replaced or maintained.
7. Prioritizing the crossings within stream branches feeding into the Wood River. An Excel spreadsheet will be created with the current status of the specific stream in terms of impassable or passable, the type of culvert present, and the number of miles of streams re-opened due to a fixed culvert.
8. Completed the field checking of 52 of the 57 5_k streams with Lawson Carey of Trout Unlimited.
9. Planning a meeting with potential partners to present preliminary findings.

RI Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Manual (Update the RI Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Manual to reduce non-point source pollution and improve knowledge of soil erosion and sediment control practices within the RI RC&D Area)

1. Received authorization to utilize information and contents of the 2002 Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control from the Commissioner of CTDEP;
2. Received a electronic copy of MA Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook;
3. Produced an electronic version of the current **Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Manual** through a cooperative effort with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT). RIDOT has placed the handbook on their website. A copy of the electronic

handbook has been forwarded to USDA-NRCS, will be posted on the RC&D website, and is available to any and all who would like it in an electronic version;

4. Held some very preliminary discussions with the ***Coastal Resources Management Council*** about their financial and technical interest in the project.

EPA Technical Assistance Grant (TAG)

On behalf of the Rhode Island Resource Conservation and Development Area Council (Council), Gerry Bertrand and I have met with Art Wing and Margaret Leshen at the USEPA Office in Boston, MA on July 26, 2006. The purpose of the visit was to:

1. Follow-up on earlier discussions with USEPA to clarify services eligible for reimbursement under their existing TAG grant No. 1-00192001-8;
2. Assure financial reporting requirements; and
3. Discuss Final Grant Reporting procedures, as the grant will close on September 30, 2006.

Forestry Special Projects Technical Assistance to the Narragansett Indian Tribe

1. Restoration of Black Ash, American chestnut and Walnut species

1.1 We processed final contractual paperwork for the USDA Rural Development RBEG grant proposal. Funds have been encumbered and are available to expend.

1.2 We have had preliminary discussions with representatives of the tribe about steps to initiate the grant. Included in this discussion were Mason & Associates, the tribe's biologist and wetlands consultant and Land Management Services, the tribe's forestry consultant.

2. Ethno-Botany Project & Workshop

RC&D is assisting with the coordination of an ethno-botany workshop and project by the Southern Rhode Island Conservation District (SRICD) and USDA-NRCS. The workshop will be held on Wednesday, August 16, 2006 at the USDA NRCS office.

RC&D, Southern RI Conservation District, the RI Indian Council, and Natural Resources Conservation Service are hosting Calvin Weatherwax, member of the Blackfeet Nation, ethno-botanist and noted expert in the interface of modern science and traditional knowledge.

Mr. Weatherwax, a graduate of the University of Montana, currently serves as professional development coordinator for the Blackfeet Community College/Rural Systemic Initiative, established and funded by the National Science Foundation. His charge is to develop and sustain a technologically competent workforce that has mastered the principles of science, mathematics, and technology in the context of Blackfeet culture. He is the former spokesperson for the Kaa Mo Taan, "circle of protection" for the Blackfeet Nation.

Additionally, RC&D is working with tribal representatives to host a tour on tribal lands for Mr. Weatherwax on Saturday, August 19, 2006. Specifically, the tour will introduce Mr. Weatherwax to the tribe's Atlantic White Cedar forest and discuss the tribe's projects

dealing with the restoration of Black ash on tribal lands. The 1/2 –day tour would involve approximately 10-12 people and include Mr. Peter Lockwood and Mr. Marc Tremblay who works with the Tribe on forestry and wetland issues, as well as anyone else from the Tribe that they feel are appropriate. The tribe is the custodian of one of southern New England's largest remaining Atlantic white cedar forests.

3. Forest Management and Fire Management Plan(s) Scoping Session

RC&D was invited to participate in the scoping session for the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Narragansett Indian Tribe's Forest Management and Fire Management Plan on July 18, 2006. The session was coordinated on behalf of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. It appears that the Tribe has some exciting opportunities in the area of forest resource conservation and management.

“Rhody Warm” - Surplus Wool Project

- We processed final contractual paperwork for the USDA Rural Development RBEG grant proposal. Funds have been encumbered and are available to expend;
- Wool collection was held on Saturday, June 17, 2006 at the Urban Edge farm in Cranston, RI. We collected over 1,400 pounds of wool.
- Wool was shipped to Faribault Mills in Minnesota for cleaning/scouring. We anticipate that this will take place in Mid-August;
- Clean wool will be returned to S&D Spinning in Massachusetts to begin the blanket manufacturing process;
- We are finalizing the contract with the textile Consultant for manufacturing of the blankets;
- I prepared a handout on the Rhody Warm project that was included in Chief Knights Tour package.
- Heather Minto spoke briefly about the project with Chief Knight during his stop at the Watson Farm on June 29, 2006
- The ***Providence Business News*** ran an article on the Rhody Warm project in their July 31, 2006 edition. The idea was picked up by the newspaper as a result of a press release generated from ***Senator Chafee's office*** announcing the award of USDS Rural Development RBEG grants to the RC&D Council; and
- The project steering committee met on July 25 to agree upon a proposed blanket design

RI Coverts Project

The Council received up to a three (3) year grant through the NRCS CIG (Conservation Innovation Grant) Program to fund the start-up of this project in RI. Grant funding totals \$25,000 per year.

We are in the process of finalizing a revised grant narrative and budget.

The Coverts Project has been reaching out to individual woodland owners and teaching them how sound management practices can make wildlife healthier, more diverse, and more abundant.

Currently this program does not exist in Rhode Island. The RI Resource Conservation & Development Area (RIRC&D) is working with the RI Division of Fish & Wildlife and Forest Environment, RIFCO, Tree Farm, Ruffed Grouse Society and URI to establish the Coverts project in Rhode Island. RI RC&D will capitalize on the availability of expertise from UCONN

Cooperative Extension as well as the interest by our partners to establish this as a viable wildlife habitat improvement opportunity for Rhode Island's woodland owners.

I had a meeting with Scott MacWilliams, URI Department of Natural Resources Science and Brian Tefft, RIDEM – Division of Fish & Wildlife to discuss their role in the project. Both are committed to supporting the grant.

Mr. Tefft is exploring the feasibility of using part of RIDEM F&W Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) funding to pay a part time program coordinator that would carry out the F&W LIP mission while, at the same time, working with the RCD office to deliver educational workshops and educational materials to private landowners developed in the Coverts project. Mr. Tefft has received some indication that this would be an appropriate use of these funds. Further discussions are required.

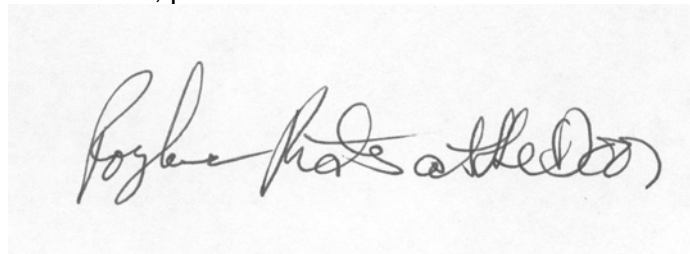
SOILS PROGRAM, by Jim Turenne

Map Coast: The CESU agreement for the MapCoast earmark funding has been completed, the agreement is awaiting final approval and signatures. Once the agreement is signed, work will begin in Quonochontaug Pond, Wickford Harbor, and areas of Narragansett Bay.

Soil Resource Assistance: On-site soil evaluations were conducted on four farms for hydric soil delineations, FRPP evaluations, and logging soil conditions for engineering designs. The RI soil staff assisted with teaching the Regulatory IV training session for delineating wetlands using the 1987 USACOE manual. Thirty people were trained during the weeklong session.

Cooperative Soil Survey Updates: A meeting with the MO-12 Board of Directors was held to discuss the MLRA reorganization for the National Cooperative Soil Survey. Michael Golden, Director of the Soil Survey Division attended the meeting and provided the guidelines for the restructuring. Since all of Rhode Island is located within MLRA 144A and 149B, future soil survey activity for the state will be conducted by the MMA office in Windsor, CT. The National Cooperative Soil Survey conference was held in Bordentown, NJ during the week of May 22. A major topic of the meeting was the discussion on subaqueous soils. There was overwhelming support for the proposed center of excellence in subaqueous soils to be located in Rhode Island.

This is the activities report for NRCS Rhode Island. If you have any questions or need further information, please let me know.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roylene Rides", is written on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

ROYLENE RIDES AT THE DOOR
State Conservationist